
Fish and Wildlife Service**50 CFR Part 17****Endangered and Threatened Wildlife
and Plants; Notice of Finding on
Petition To List Agave Murpheyi**

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service,
Interior.

ACTION: Notice of 12-month petition
finding.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces a 12-month petition finding for a petition to amend the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants. Substantial information has been presented that the petition to list the plant *Agave murpheyi* is warranted, but precluded by listing actions of higher priority.

DATES: The finding announced in this notice was made in January, 1990.

ADDRESSES: Information, comments, or questions regarding the petition may be submitted to the Phoenix Field Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 3616 West Thomas, Suite 6, Phoenix, Arizona

85019 (Telephone 602/261-4720, FTS 261-4720).

The petition, petition finding, and supporting data are available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the address listed above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Sue Rutman at the Phoenix Field Office listed above.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Section 4(b)(3)(B) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended in 1982 (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), requires that, for any petition to revise the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants that contains substantial scientific or commercial information, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) should make a finding within 12 months of the date of receipt of the petition on whether the petitioned action is (a) not warranted, (b) warranted, or (c) warranted, but precluded from immediate proposal by other pending proposals. Such a 12-month finding is to be published promptly in the **Federal Register**.

A petition (dated August 30, 1988) from Dr. Gary Nabhan, Wendy Hodgson, and Rick Delamater of the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, Arizona was received by the Service on September 9, 1988. It requested the Service to list the plant *Agave murpheyi* as a threatened species. A 90-day determination that the action requested may be warranted was reported in the **Federal Register** for April 24, 1989 (54 FR

16379). (This notice erroneously stated that the petition requested listing the species as an endangered one.) That notice initiated formal status review of the species.

Agave murpheyi (Hohokam agave) is a unique agave of unknown origin that reproduces mainly by vegetative means. It is now restricted to fewer than 50 individuals in central Arizona. A few additional individuals are found on the Tohono O'Odham Indian Reservation in southern Arizona, and in northern Sonora, Mexico. In central Arizona, *Agave murpheyi* has been found in the Tonto Basin, southern Bradshaw Mountains and the New River foothills, where it grows below 2,800 feet elevation in association with prehistoric villages and agricultural terraces. In southern Arizona and northern Sonora, individuals are found in historic or currently occupied small towns and settlements. In all cases the surrounding vegetation is Sonoran desertscrub.

Threats include suburban development in central Arizona, rural development in Mexico, inundation by expanding reservoirs and reservoir construction activity, illegal collecting, and livestock grazing. Plants in Paradise Valley (Phoenix) have already been lost to suburban development and more may be lost in the New River and other areas due to the same threat. Inundations by the impending expansion of Lake Pleasant and loss of habitat due to associated construction activities could potentially destroy plants. Although *Agave murpheyi* is protected by Arizona native plant law, plants may be taken in

remote areas or where law enforcement is difficult. Cattle may remove all or part of the developing flower stalks and reduce reproductive potential.

Due to *Agave murpheyi*'s limited distribution and abundance, and the present threats to the species, the Service has determined that the action requested by the petitioners is warranted but precluded by listing actions of higher priority. The Service intends to add the species to the next plant notice of review as a Category 2 candidate species.

The Service would appreciate any additional data, comments, and suggestions from the public, other concerned governmental agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any interested party concerning this species.

Author

This notice was prepared by Vicki M. Finn, Division of Endangered Species and Habitat Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240 (703/358-2171 or FTS 921-2171).

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1361-1407; 16 U.S.C. 1531-1543; 16 U.S.C. 4201-4245; Pub. L. 99-625, 100 Stat. 3500; unless otherwise noted.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 17

Endangered and threatened wildlife, Fish, Marine mammals, Plants (agriculture).

Dated: February 23, 1990.

Richard N. Smith,

Acting Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.
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